SHAKUNTALA

When King Dushyanta first saw Shakuntala, he was struck by her incomparable beauty and gentle character. He made her his wife and vowed to take her back to his palace. But a curse from the sage Durvasa erased her memory so completely from his mind that he failed to recognise her. Much later, when the curse was broken he realised his mistake but it was too late....or so it seemed to be.
The story of Shakuntala first appeared in the Mahabharata. It was later adapted into a play by the Sanskrit dramatist and poet, Kalidasa.

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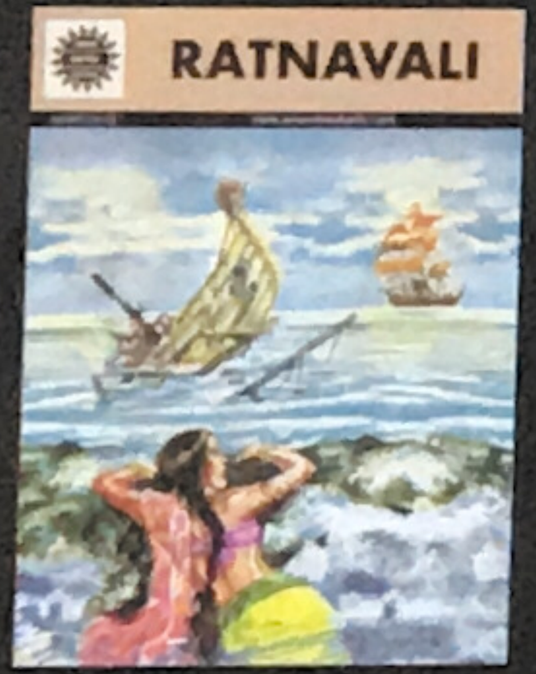

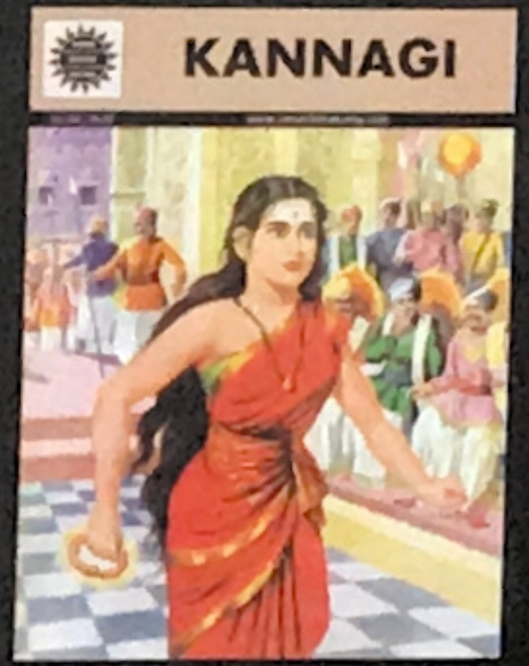

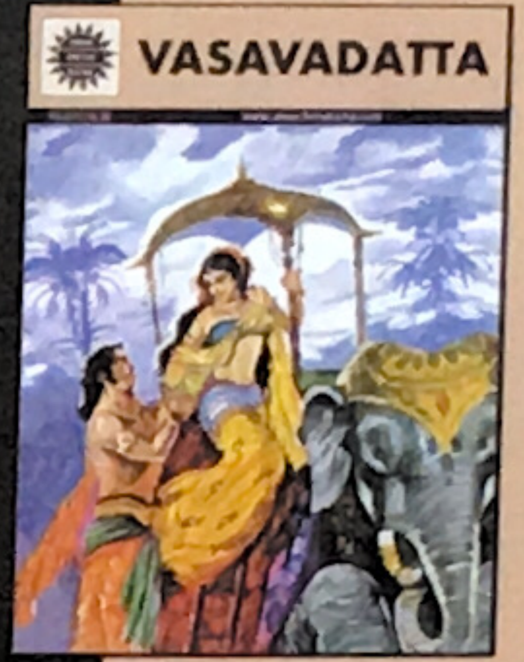

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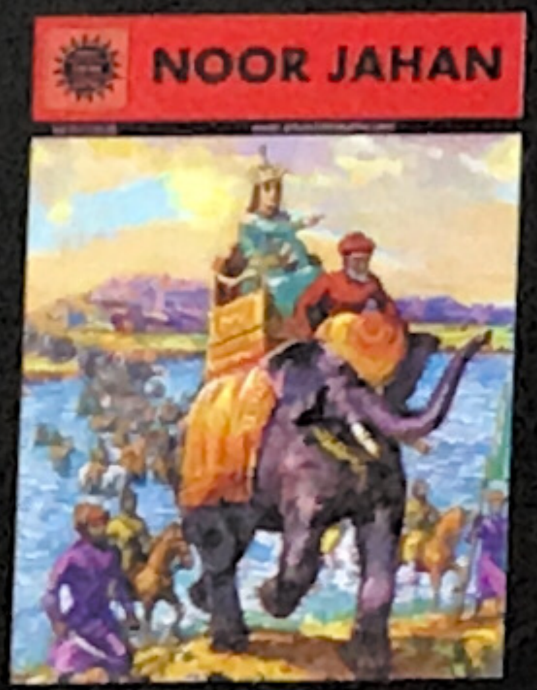

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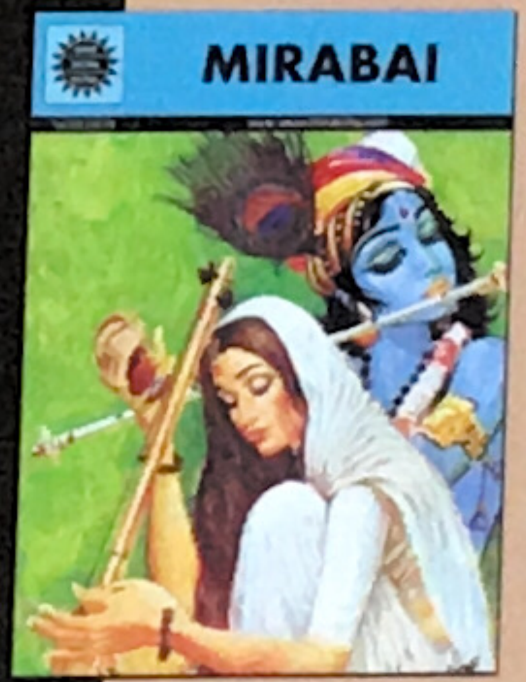

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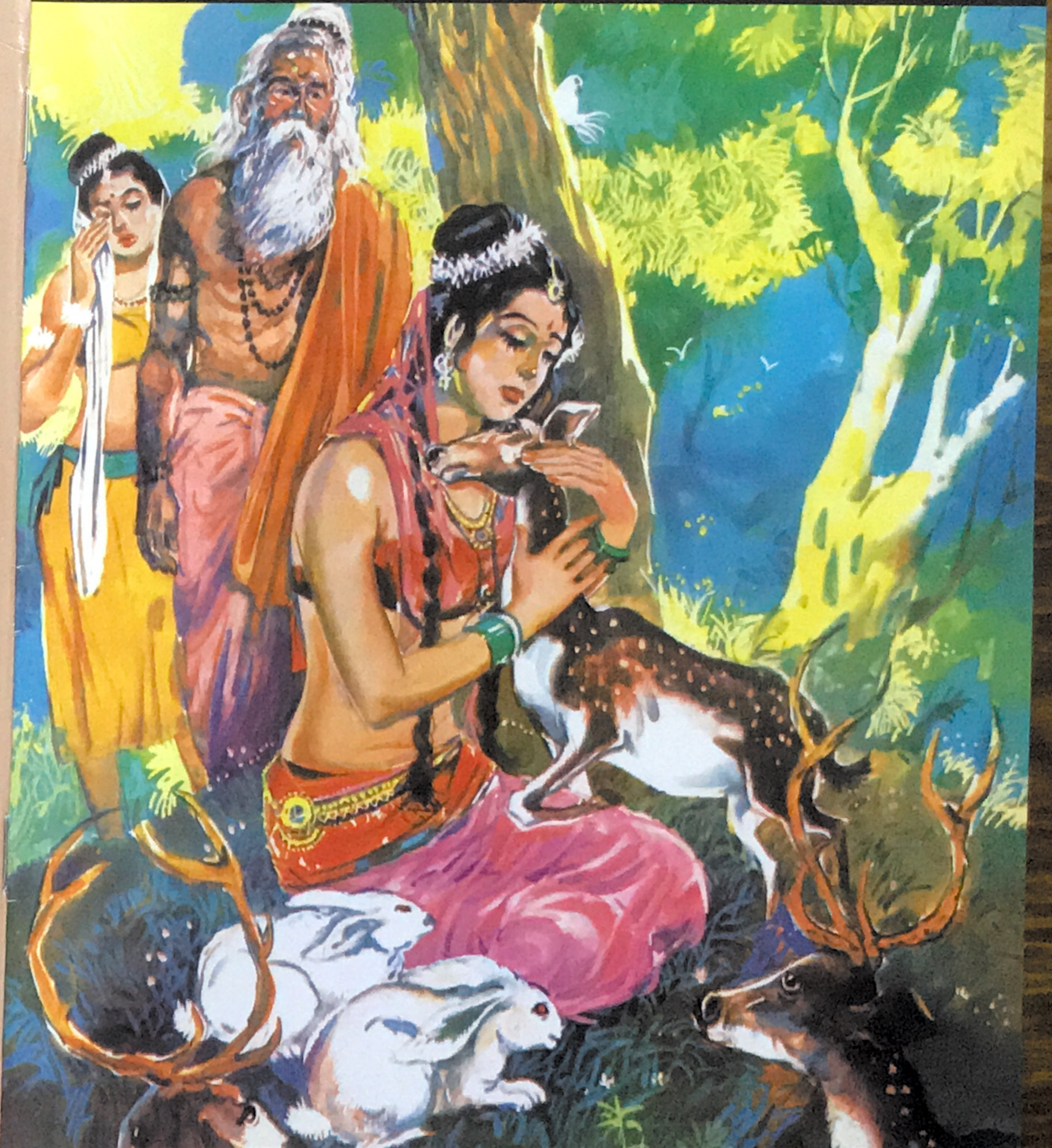
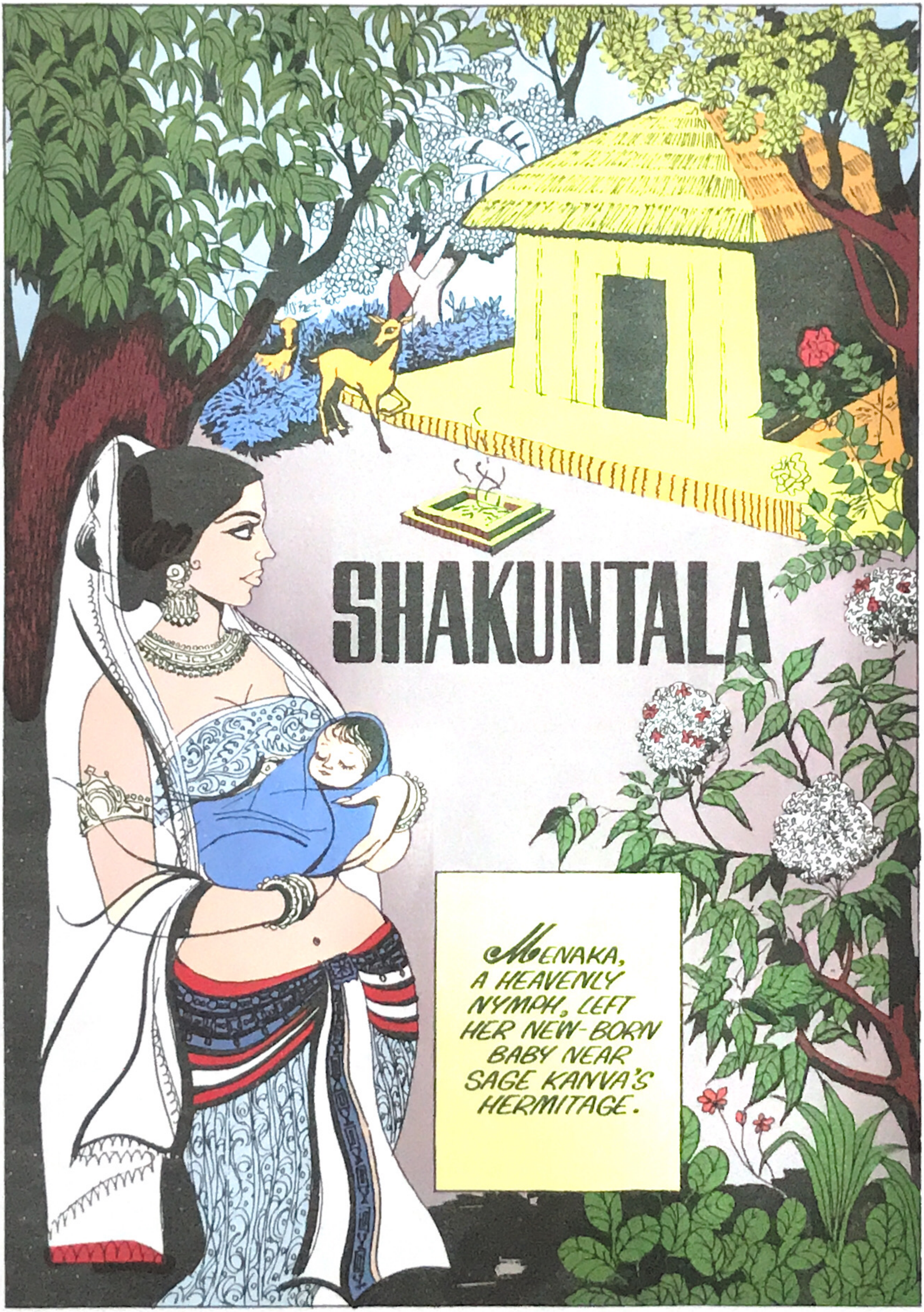
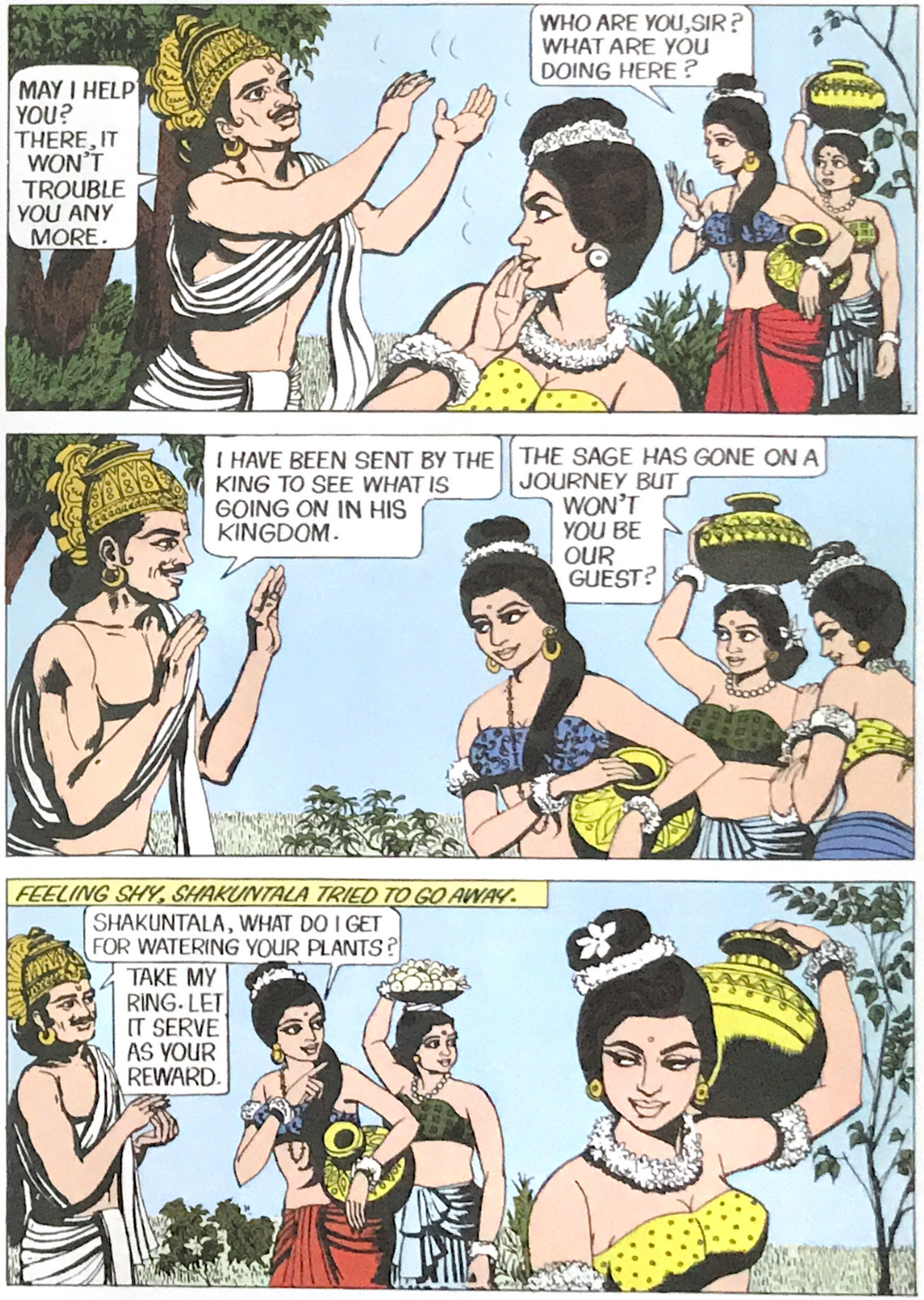



SHAKUNTALA
MENAKA, A HEAVENLY NYMPH, LEFT HER NEW-BORN BABY NEAR SAGE KANVA'S HERMITAGE.

SHAKUNTAL BIRDS FLUTTERED ABOVE THE BABY. THE NOISE DISTURBED THE SAGE'S PRAYERS. HE LOOKED BEHIND AND SAW THE BABY.
THE SAGE PICKED IT UP.
I SHALL ADOPT THE BABY-GIRL AND CALL HER SHAKUNTALA.
THE BABY GREW UP AND MADE FRIENDS WITH THE ANIMALS AROUND HER.

SHAKUNTALA, NOW A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, LED A USEFUL LIFE WITH HER FRIENDS PRIYAMVADA AND ANASUYA.
PRIYAMVADA, YOU ARE ALWAYS TEASING ANASUYA.
YOU ARE ALWAYS BUSY SHAKUNTALA. LET US HAVE SOME FUN.
ONE DAY, YOUNG KING DUSHYANT OF HASTINAPUR, CAME TO THAT FOREST TO HUNT.
LOOK! THERE IS A FINE STAG JUST AHEAD OF US.
WE WILL GO LIKE THE WIND AND HUNT IT DOWN.
STOP! THE FAWN BELONGS TO SAGE KANVA.
I SHALL HUNT NO MORE, BUT GO FOR THE BLESSING OF THE SAGE.

TAKE MY ROBES AND ORNAMENTS. I WILL GO IN SIMPLE CLOTHES AND MEET THE SAGE.
WHEN THE KING HEARD VOICES, HE HID BEHIND A TREE.
OH PRIYA, HELP ME! THERE IS A BEE WORRYING ME.
LUCKY BEE! TO TOUCH HER LOVELY FACE.
CALL THE KING TO HELP YOU, SHAKUNTALA. IT IS HIS DUTY TO HELP HIS SUBJECTS.


MAY I HELP YOU? THERE, IT WON'T TROUBLE YOU ANY MORE.
WHO ARE YOU, SIR? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I HAVE BEEN SENT BY THE KING TO SEE WHAT IS GOING ON IN HIS KINGDOM.
THE SAGE HAS GONE ON A JOURNEY BUT WON'T YOU BE OUR GUEST?
FEELING SHY, SHAKUNTALA TRIED TO GO AWAY.
SHAKUNTALA, WHAT DO I GET FOR WATERING YOUR PLANTS?
TAKE MY RING. LET IT SERVE AS YOUR REWARD.

THE RING HAD THE KING'S SEAL ON IT.
OH ! OUR GUEST IS THE KING HIMSELF.
WE ARE HONOUR-ED BY YOUR VISIT.
LET US GO AND GET SOME FRUIT AND HONEY FOR THE KING.
OH ! HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS !
WHAT A HAND-SOME MAN HE IS !

PARDON US, SIR, WE HAVE VERY SIMPLE FOOD TO OFFER YOU.
PLEASE SIT DOWN AND HAVE SOME FRUIT WITH US.
WHILE THE KING WAS EATING, SOME HERMITS CAME ALONG.
WON'T YOU PROTECT US FROM THE DEMONS OF THIS FOREST ? THEY DISTURB OUR PRAYERS.
DON'T WORRY, I SHALL REMAIN HERE TILL I DESTROY ALL THE DEMONS.
WE SHALL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO YOU.

AFTER SOME DAYS WHEN THE KING WAS KEEPING WATCH FOR THE DEMONS, HE HEARD VOICES.
LET ME HIDE HERE AND LISTEN.
TELL US WHY YOU LOOK SO SAD, DEAR SHAKUNTALA.
HOW BRAVE AND GOOD OUR KING IS. I WISH I COULD MARRY A MAN LIKE HIM. BUT I AM ONLY A POOR VILLAGE GIRL.
SINCE YOU ARE SO SHY, WHY DON'T YOU WRITE TO HIM? HERE IS A LOTUS LEAF WRITE ON IT WITH YOUR NAIL.
I do not know what you think of me. But I think you are the most wonderful man on earth
I MUST TAKE THIS LETTER TO THE KING.

OH, HERE HE COMES!
THIS MESSAGE IS FROM SHAKUNTALA.
TELL ME, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOUR FRIEND?
READ THIS. SHE WILL SOON BE HERE.
COME PRIYAMVADA, IT IS TIME TO FEED THE DEER AND FAWNS.
I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH, SHAKUNTALA.
I LOVE YOU TOO.
LET US EXCHANGE GARLANDS AND MARRY AS FOREST PEOPLE DO.

A FEW DAYS LATER, A MESSENGER CAME.
YOUR MAJESTY, THERE IS URGENT WORK IN HASTINA-PUR AND YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY.
I WILL COME AT ONCE.
I MUST GO NOW, DEAREST. WEAR THIS RING ON YOUR FINGER ALWAYS.
GOOD-BYE, SHAKUNTALA! I SHALL SOON SEND MY MINISTERS TO BRING YOU TO MY PALACE.
SOMETIME LATER, SAGE DURVASA PAID A VISIT TO THE HERMITAGE. SHAKUN-TALA WAS THINKING ABOUT HER HUSBAND.
WHERE'S MY FRIEND KANVA? DOES NO ONE WELCOME A GUEST IN THIS PLACE?

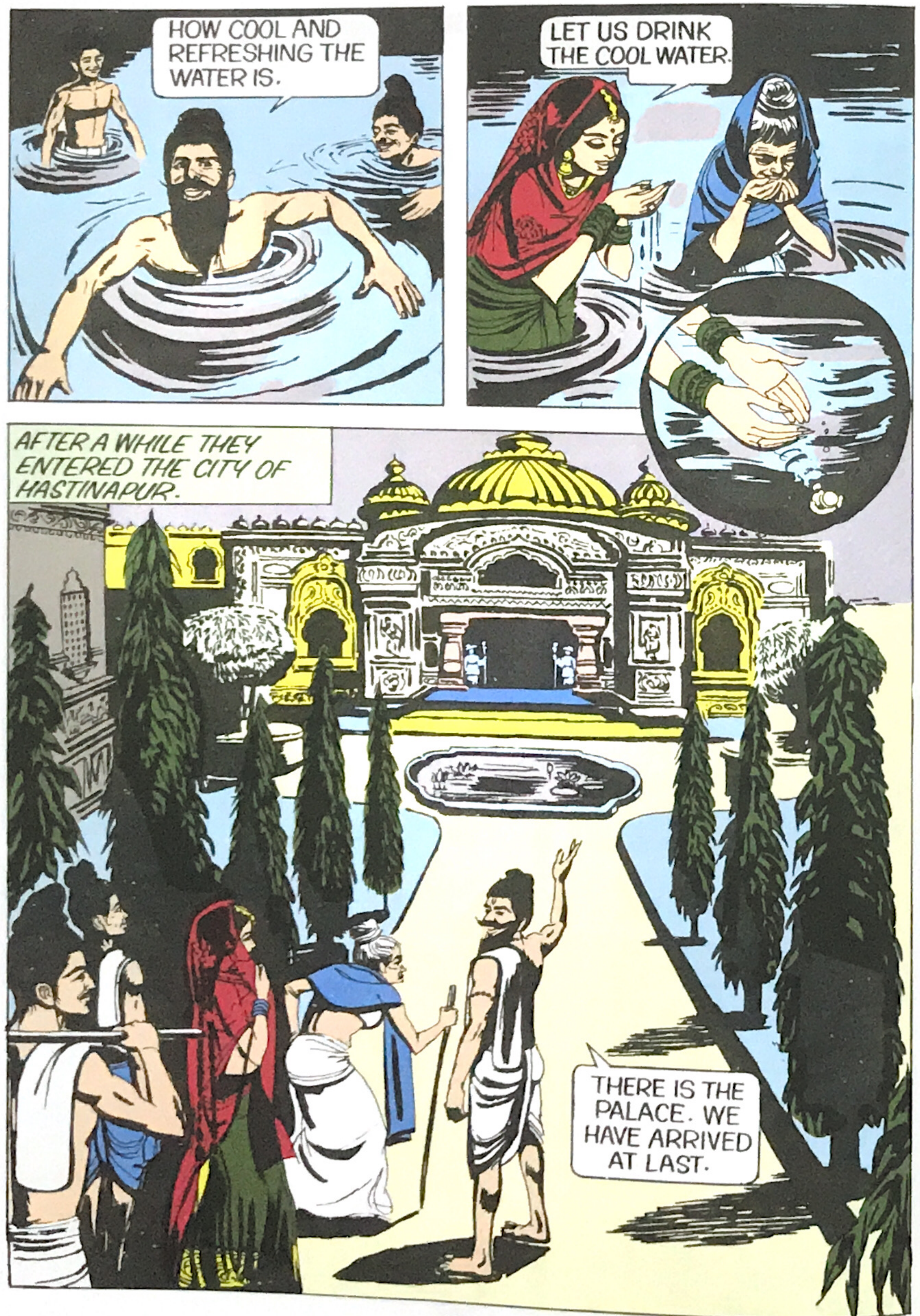
DURVASA BECAME ANGRY AND CURSED SHAKUNTALA.
YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR DUTY TO A GUEST, SO THE PERSON YOU'RE THINKING OF WILL ALSO FORGET YOU.
HOLY SIR, SAGE KANVA IS AWAY. PLEASE FORGIVE SHAKUNTALA. SHE HAS NEVER HURT ANYONE IN HER LIFE.
I CANNOT TAKE BACK MY CURSE... BUT I CAN CHANGE IT A LITTLE.
THAT PERSON WILL REMEMBER SHAKUNTALA, WHEN HE SEES AN OBJECT HE HAS GIVEN HER.
THE RING! SHE WEARS THE KING'S RING.

AFTER SOME WEEKS —
OH! WHEN WILL DUSHYANT SEND FOR ME?
IF ONLY FATHER KANVA WERE HERE, HE WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHEN SAGE KANVA RETURNED TO HIS HERMITAGE, HE HEARD A HEAVENLY VOICE.
"O SAGE, REJOICE! SHAKUNTALA IS MARRIED TO A MAN WORTHY OF HER. SHE WILL SOON HAVE A SON WHO WILL BE A GREAT EMPEROR."
THE SAGE WAS WELCOMED BY THE GIRLS.
I HAVE HEARD THE GOOD NEWS. NOW WE MUST SEND YOU TO YOUR HUSBAND.

GAUTAMI, AN OLD LADY, WAS LIKE A MOTHER TO SHAKUNTALA. SHE MADE PREPARATIONS FOR SHAKUNTALA TO LEAVE.
OUR SHAKUNTALA DOES NOT HAVE CLOTHES AND JEWELS FIT FOR A BRIDE.
THE GODS ALWAYS HELP THE GOOD.
SUDDENLY A MIRACLE HAPPENED.
OH LOOK! WHAT LOVELY CLOTHES ARE HERE!
ON EVERY BRANCH THERE'S A SHINING JEWEL.
OH SHAKUNTALA, HOW LOVELY YOU LOOK IN THESE CLOTHES.
NOW THAT YOU WILL BE LIVING IN A PALACE, YOU WILL FORGET YOUR POOR FRIENDS.

I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU. I WILL COME TO MEET YOU OFTEN.
SAD AT PARTING, THE PLANT CLUNG TO HER.
TAKE CARE OF MY FAWN AND ALL MY OTHER PETS.
OH CREATURES OF THE FOREST! SAY GOOD-BYE TO SHAKUNTALA WHO ALWAYS LOVED AND CARED FOR YOU.
FATHER KANVA WAS ALSO SAD. THE TREES SHED TEARS IN THE FORM OF LEAVES. PEACOCKS STOPPED DANCING AND THE DEER FORGOT TO EAT.

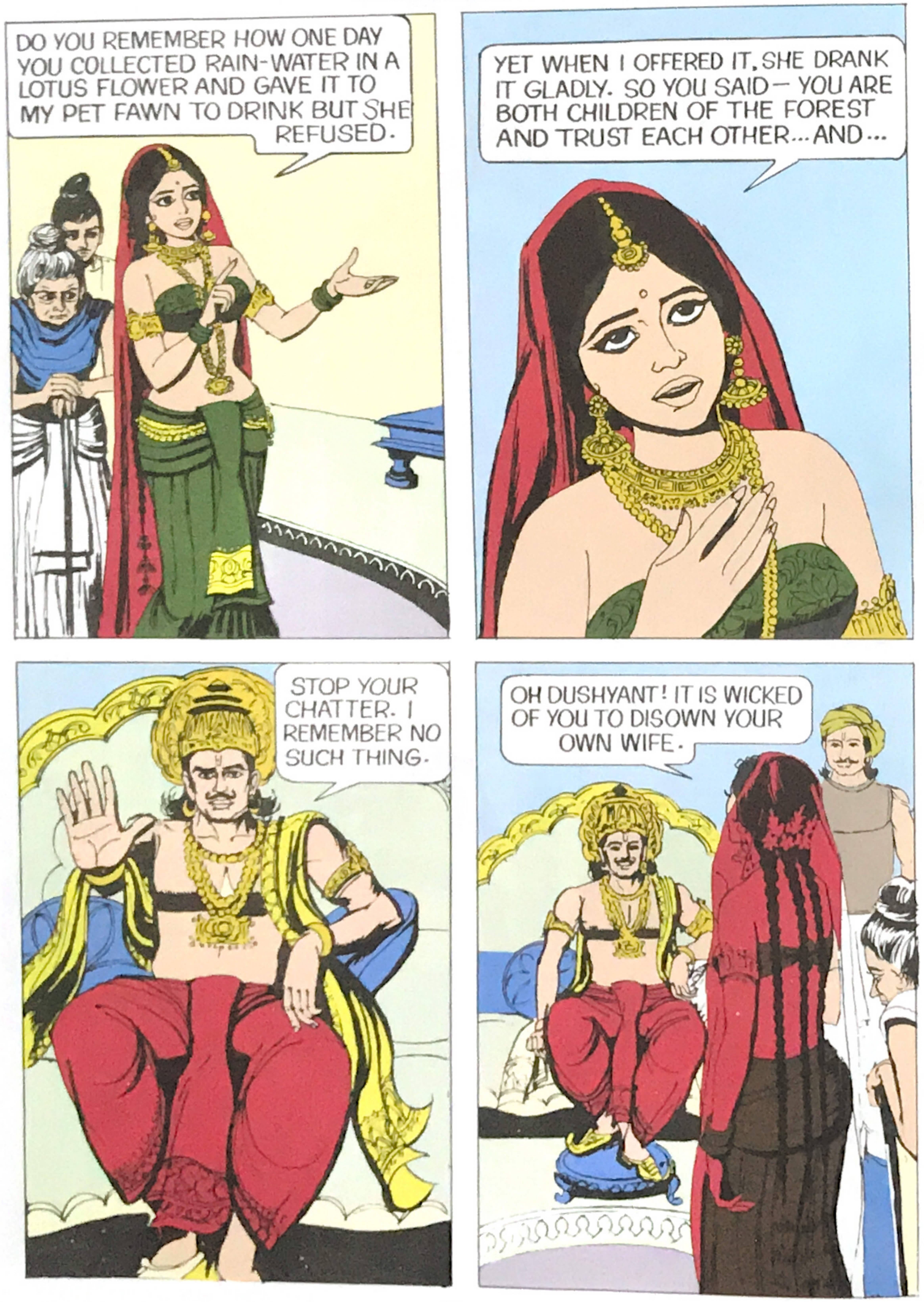
DON'T LET RICHES MAKE YOU PROUD AND BE A GOOD AND FAITHFUL WIFE.
I SHALL DO ALL THAT YOU SAY, DEAR FATHER.
HOW LONELY WE SHALL FEEL WITHOUT HER.
GOOD-BYE SHAKUNTALA. DO LOOK AFTER THE RING THE KING HAS GIVEN YOU.
AFTER SOME DAYS THEY REACHED RIVER GANGA.
LET US BATHE IN THE HOLY RIVER AND OFFER PRAYERS.

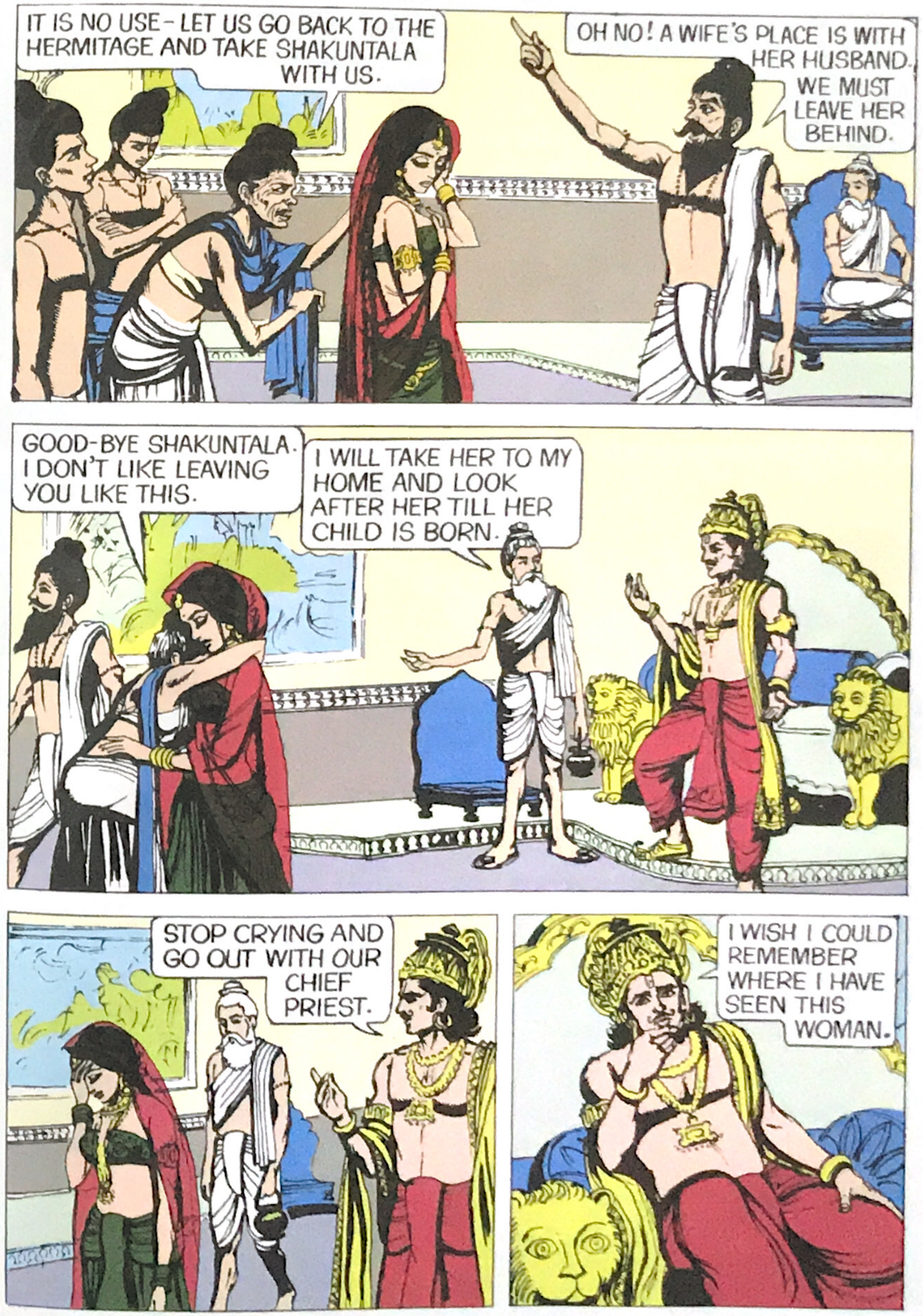

HOW COOL AND REFRESHING THE WATER IS.
LET US DRINK THE COOL WATER.
AFTER A WHILE THEY ENTERED THE CITY OF HASTINAPUR.
THERE IS THE PALACE. WE HAVE ARRIVED AT LAST.

DURVASA'S CURSE HAD WORKED. THE KING HAD FORGOTTEN SHAKUNTALA.
YOUR MAJESTY, SOME INMATES OF SAGE KANVA'S ASHRAM HAVE COME TO SEE YOU.
I WONDER WHAT THEY WANT WITH ME. SHOW THEM IN.
SAGE KANVA GREETS YOU AND HAS SENT SHAKUNTALA, YOUR WIFE, WHO WILL SOON BE A MOTHER.
THE KING LOOKED SURPRISED.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER YOUR WIFE, SHAKUNTALA ?

I DON'T KNOW ANYONE BY THAT NAME. YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN.
HOW STRANGE THAT A MAN SHOULD FORGET HIS OWN WIFE.
SHAKUNTALA, WHY DON'T YOU SHOW THE RING WHICH THE KING HAD GIVEN YOU?
HERE IS THE RING YOU GAVE ME—OH! WHERE IS IT? I HAD NEVER REMOVED IT.

THE RING MUST HAVE FALLEN SOMEWHERE. LET US LOOK FOR IT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT.
SHAKUNTALA, RAISE YOUR VEIL. THE KING WILL SURELY REMEMBER YOU WHEN HE SEES YOUR FACE.
YOUR FACE IS INDEED LOVELY BUT I HAVE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE.


DO YOU REMEMBER HOW ONE DAY YOU COLLECTED RAIN-WATER IN A LOTUS FLOWER AND GAVE IT TO MY PET FAWN TO DRINK BUT SHE REFUSED.
YET WHEN I OFFERED IT, SHE DRANK IT GLADLY. SO YOU SAID – YOU ARE BOTH CHILDREN OF THE FOREST AND TRUST EACH OTHER... AND...
STOP YOUR CHATTER. I REMEMBER NO SUCH THING.
OH DUSHYANT! IT IS WICKED OF YOU TO DISOWN YOUR OWN WIFE.


IT IS NO USE – LET US GO BACK TO THE HERMITAGE AND TAKE SHAKUNTALA WITH US.
OH NO! A WIFE'S PLACE IS WITH HER HUSBAND. WE MUST LEAVE HER BEHIND.
GOOD-BYE SHAKUNTALA. I DON'T LIKE LEAVING YOU LIKE THIS.
I WILL TAKE HER TO MY HOME AND LOOK AFTER HER TILL HER CHILD IS BORN.
STOP CRYING AND GO OUT WITH OUR CHIEF PRIEST.
I WISH I COULD REMEMBER WHERE I HAVE SEEN THIS WOMAN.

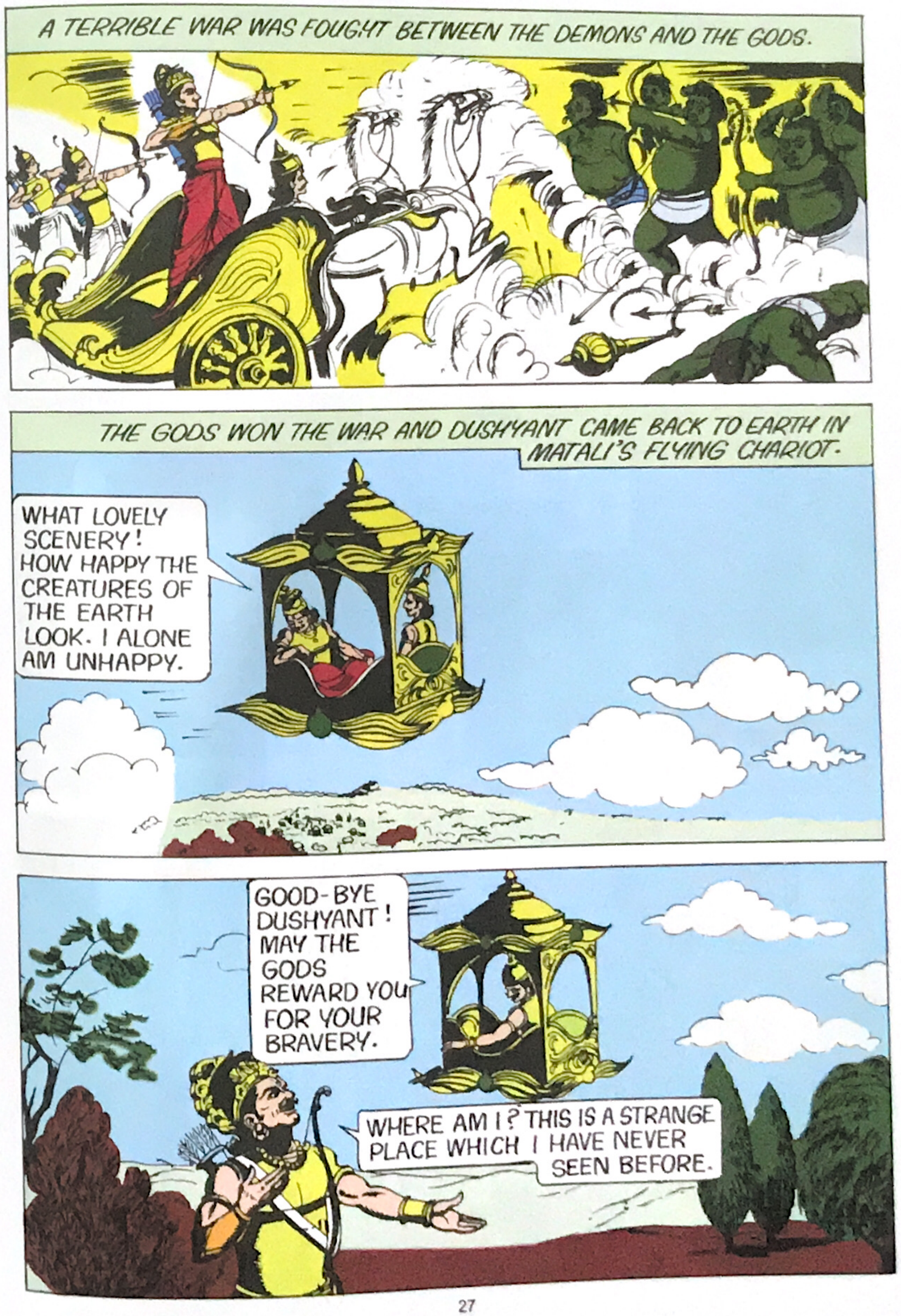
SUDDENLY THERE WAS A BRIGHT LIGHT IN THE SKY. SHAKUNTALA'S MOTHER APPEARED.
WHO IS THIS HEAVENLY NYMPH ?
THE NYMPH CARRIED AWAY SHAKUNTALA INTO THE CLOUDS.
THIS IS VERY STRANGE! I MUST TELL THE KING ABOUT IT.
A FEW DAYS LATER A FISHERMAN WAS ARRESTED IN THE BAZAAR.
LET ME GO! I DID NOT STEAL THIS RING.
YOU THIEF! IT IS THE KING'S RING. IT HAS HIS SEAL ON IT.

I SUPPOSE THE RING IS A PRESENT TO YOU FROM THE KING HIMSELF. HA! HA! HA!
LIAR! TAKE THAT AND THAT.
LET US DRAG THE RASCAL TO THE KING. THE KING WILL SURELY REWARD US.
YOUR MAJESTY, THIS FISHER-MAN WAS TRYING TO SELL YOUR RING. HE IS A THIEF.
HERE IS THE RING WITH YOUR SEAL ON IT.

OH KING, DO NOT KILL ME. I AM TELLING THE TRUTH. I FOUND THIS RING IN THE BODY OF A FISH I CAUGHT TODAY.
OH, NOW I REMEMBER EVERYTHING. THIS IS THE RING I HAD GIVEN TO SHAKUNTALA, MY WIFE, WHEN I LEFT HER.
GIVE THE FISHERMAN A BAG OF GOLD FOR HE HAS DONE ME A GREAT SERVICE.
THE FISHERMAN GOT HIS REWARD.
OH MOST GENEROUS KING! I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOUR KINDNESS TO ME.

THE KING WAS VERY SAD.
OH SHAKUNTALA! HOW CRUELLY I HAVE TREATED YOU. HOW COULD I FORGET YOU?
CALL THE CHIEF PRIEST.
WHERE IS MY WIFE SHAKUNTALA? WHO WILL BRING MY BELOVED BACK TO ME?
A NYMPH CARRIED HER AWAY AND SHE IS LOST FOR EVER.

TO LESSEN HIS GRIEF, THE KING PAINTED SHAKUNTALA'S PICTURE.
HERE IS LOVELY SHAKUNTALA IN THE GARDEN. HERE IS HER JASMINE CREEPER AND THERE IS HER PET FAWN...
FOR A FEW YEARS THE KING LED A QUIET LIFE THINKING OF SHAKUNTALA ALL THE TIME. ONE DAY–
GOD INDRA HAS SENT MATALI WITH A MESSAGE.
SHOW HIM IN.
THE GODS WANT YOUR HELP IN A WAR AGAINST THE DEMONS.
I AM READY TO HELP.


A TERRIBLE WAR WAS FOUGHT BETWEEN THE DEMONS AND THE GODS.
THE GODS WON THE WAR AND DUSHYANT CAME BACK TO EARTH IN MATALI'S FLYING CHARIOT.
WHAT LOVELY SCENERY! HOW HAPPY THE CREATURES OF THE EARTH LOOK. I ALONE AM UNHAPPY.
GOOD-BYE DUSHYANT! MAY THE GODS REWARD YOU FOR YOUR BRAVERY.
WHERE AM I? THIS IS A STRANGE PLACE WHICH I HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

THE KING HEARD A CHILD'S VOICE.
I WONDER WHO THIS CHILD IS. WHAT IS HE DOING WITH A LION CUB?
OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE AND LET ME COUNT YOUR TEETH.
TWO WOMEN CAME FROM BEHIND THE TREES.
YOU ARE A NAUGHTY LITTLE FELLOW. LET THE CUB GO OR THE LIONESS WILL COME AND KILL YOU.
I WILL GIVE YOU A NICE TOY IF YOU LET THE CUB GO.
WHAT A BRAVE AND HAND-SOME BOY HE IS!
GIVE ME THE TOY FIRST AND THEN WE SHALL SEE ABOUT THE CUB.
STRANGE! VERY STRANGE!

WHAT IS STRANGE ABOUT ME?
THE BOY WON'T LET THE CUB GO.
YOU LOOK SO MUCH LIKE BHARAT.
CHILD, LET THE CUB GO. IT WANTS TO PLAY.
BHARAT'S AMULET HAS FALLEN OFF.
THE KING REACHED OUT FOR THE AMULET.
STOP! DON'T TOUCH THAT AMULET!
OH! HE HAS PICKED IT UP
WHY SHOULD I NOT TOUCH THE AMULET?

IT IS A MAGIC AMULET GIVEN BY SAGE MARICHA. IT WAS TIED ROUND THE CHILD'S ARM TO KEEP HIM FROM HARM. ONLY HIS PARENTS CAN TOUCH IT.
WHAT HAPPENS IF SOME ONE ELSE TOUCHES IT ?
IT TURNS INTO A SNAKE AND BITES THAT PERSON.
THE KING RUSHED TO THE CHILD AND PICKED HIM UP.
OH, MY SON! MY SON!
DON'T CALL ME YOUR SON. THE GREAT KING DUSHYANT IS MY FATHER, NOT YOU.
LITTLE ONE, TAKE ME TO YOUR MOTHER, SHAKUNTALA. SHE WILL TELL YOU WHO I AM.
MOTHER, HERE'S A MAN WHO KEEPS CALLING ME HIS SON. HE WANTS TO SEE YOU.
OH DUSHYANT, SO YOU HAVE COME AT LAST.

DEAR SHAKUNTALA! FORGIVE ME FOR NOT REMEMBERING YOU AT FIRST. WHEN I FOUND YOUR RING, I REMEMBERED EVERYTHING.
HE IS INDEED YOUR FATHER, LITTLE ONE.
I MUST TAKE YOU BOTH TO MY KINGDOM AT ONCE.
NO, LET US GO TO FATHER MARICHA INTO WHOSE CARE MY MOTHER, MENAKA, HAD LEFT ME ALL THESE YEARS.
BUT FATHER, I MUST SHOW YOU ALL MY PET ANIMALS FIRST.
FATHER MARICHA, FATHER MARICHA! I HAVE THE MOST WONDERFUL NEWS FOR YOU. MY FATHER HAS AT LAST COME TO TAKE ME WITH HIM TO HIS KINGDOM.
THIS IS JOYFUL NEWS INDEED.

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